

**Political History Collection
Interview H.0046.02 : Tape 2**

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Language of Interview: Tibetan
Interviewed by: Tsarong Paljor
Name: Baba Aka [Tib. 'ba' pa a dga']
Gender: Male
Age: 75
Date of Birth: 1917

Abstract

Baba Aka [Tib. 'ba' pa a dga'] is a Khamba from a well-off farming family in Targye Gomba in Ganzi. In this interview, he talks mostly about when the Chinese communists first came to his area in 1949-50, and then how they imposed democratic reforms in 1955-56 and how this led to the revolt and his fleeing to Central Tibet.

Tape 2

Q: Last time, I asked you about the Chinese arrival in the 1950. Since we are doing this work in America, we need to know about some other things. How old are you now?

A: I am 75 years old.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Targye Gomba [Tib. dar rgyas dgon pa].

Q: What was your household doing at that time?

A: My household were farmers. We didn't do any trading. We got all of our food and clothes from the crops and we also had a few servants and maid servants and we gave them housing.

Q: Did you do any household ventures?

A: No, we didn't do trading and our former generations also didn't do trading. Basically, in that area, there were five chiefs [Tib. dpon khag] and Targye Gomba consisted of 15 shoga.

Q: Did you have any nomads areas?

A: No, we just had 5-6-7 dzo for plowing the fields.

Q: It wasn't an agropastoral area, right?

A: We were just working in the fields.

Q: In 1950, Chamdo and those places were already lost, right?

A: Yes.

Q: At that time, the Chinese had arrived in Tibet up to quite a considerable extent, right?

A: Yes.

Q: When did the Chinese first arrive at Kham? How did they act at that time? Chamdo was lost in 1950, right?

A: Yes, before that, in 1940s, the Chinese invaded and came along.

Q: Was it one year before 1950 when the Chinese came to your place?

A: I don't remember the exact year. Probably, it was 3-4-5 year before 1950. They had already arrived at our place and stayed in Chamdo for 1-2 years and then went up to Tibet. In the beginning, we heard that the Chinese fought with the Guomindang and then they surrendered to the Communist Party and the Tibetans also surrendered to the Chinese.

After the Chinese came up, they treated us very nicely. They gave us tea and clothing and in this way they deceived us. But, at that time, we didn't know that and we thought that the [Chinese] government had gave us a good amount of things. They also paid dayan [silver coins] for the salary of the chiefs and the appointed them as leaders. They also gave the beggars money, shovels and hoes and told them, "You should do the work and we will help you." They brought them and made them attend the meetings.

Q: Did they give them shovels and hoes?

A: Yes, they also brought them to the meetings to give talks at the meetings. They did that for a couple of years. After that, the Chinese said, "We are going help the Tibetans and most of our troops are not going up to Tibet. The doctors and some people are going to Tibet to help them." In this way, they went up. Actually, the Chinese who were going up were all soldiers. In the beginning, the Chinese were saying pleasant sounding things.

Q: How did you meet the Chinese for the first time?

A: When I was staying home, in the 12th month of the year 1955, they called the chiefs to a meeting.

Q: In 1955, the Dalai Lama went to China and came back. Wasn't this before that time?

A: No, it wasn't before that. It was after that. The Dalai Lama went to China in 1954 and didn't he come back in the 9-10th month in 1954?

Q: I am not sure.

A: Probably, I think he came in 9-10 month. I remember he went down when the fields were about to plow. When he came up, it was summer [of 1955].

Q: How did you meet the Chinese for the first time?

A: In the beginning, the Chinese called all the households in Targye Gomba to a meeting. They called the chiefs to the meeting held in the village and they also took the chiefs [Tib. dpon po] to China and they held meetings over there. It was after that, when they made us suffer while they took the chiefs to China and we were about to leave. I was a middle standard household and I had several guns and I had horses, yaks and grain and other things. In that village, there were about 30 households. The Chinese said, "Except those 3-4 households like Getsang Drangwatsang and Garatsang who were rich farmers and land lords, we will help the other households." This is the way they held the meetings.

The Chinese told us, "We will help you. From now on, you are not allowed to keep servants and maid servants." I had a monk relative, my wife, my younger sister and a paternal aunt, 4 sons and one daughter. The children were all small. They took away our servants and maidservants. After that, the Chinese held meetings and every time, they want us to hand over the guns. Then the Chinese came to our door and said, "You have this and that amount of guns and this amount of ammunition. You also have axes and swords. You have to hand them over to us. You also have to hand over the swords. You are not allowed to keep a single kind of weapon. If the enemy and bandits would come, we, the People's Liberation Army will go [to defeat them]. You won't have any enemies. We will leave you a cleaver to cut meat hanged in the kitchen." Like this, they took away all the weapons.

Then they called us to the meeting held in the county seat and told us to hand over the weapons. Among us, there was a bigger household called Khargo [Tib. ?] Nyerpa Tshang [Tib. gnyer pa tshang] who had only a nun left at home. The people were taken to China. At that time, the Chinese soldiers surrounded us carrying guns and told us to hand over our guns. We said, "We had already hand over the guns." They said, you had handed over some guns and you have also hid some guns." We told them, "We don't have any guns to hand over."

Then the Chinese said that they want me to lend them some dzo that they need them to give the beggars for plowing the fields. They also want me to give them 400-500 bo of barley. I said, "I don't have that much barley to give you. We farmers don't have that much barley. We only have the barley to eat. We got this barley from our own hard work and we didn't have any other source of income." Then the Chinese said, "This is not true because you had many servants." I said, "We had servants and we paid them the wages and food and housing." The Chinese forced us to give them those things and they also said that I have to lend them carpets and pots and pans saying that they have to give them to the beggars. The Chinese also took our horses.

Q: Where did the Chinese take those things?

A: At that time, the Chinese had gathered some beggars and they took those things and gave it to them. At that time, the Chinese told the beggars, "You should oppose those people [the landlords and rich farmers] and you should eliminate them. We will support you." There were some beggars who liked us and they told us, "Now, they [Chinese] are not going to treat you nicely. They are holding meetings and saying that we should eliminate you people." After that, it was said that they will not liberate the nomads in Targye Gomba. They differentiated the farmers from the nomads like this. After that, the Chinese sent back the chiefs once from the meeting.

After that, we discussed that if we stay like this, we would be unable to hold the place. So we should better leave. Then they [Chinese] said that they are going to liberate the farmers. They made the landlords and the chiefs suffer and our household was middle class, but they also made us suffer. So we were talking to each other, "If we stay like this, finally, we will have to go to the jail. We should leave and do something and that it would be useless to stay home."

As for me, I had my wife and many small children and couldn't take them with me. Then I sent two of my children to the great monasteries in Lhasa. At that time, my wife and my sister told me to give all of the things to the Chinese if we could live together. Actually, it wouldn't help even if we gave them all the things because they didn't let us stay at home [calling to the meetings]. Then we talked to each other, "It won't work out if we don't go out to fight the Chinese." All of us had the same thought and one day we made the plan for leaving. At that time, [Sandu [Tib. sa 'du] Lonyendra [Tib. blo snyan grags] had already left, but there were four chiefs; Tsewang Drin [Tib. tshe dbang mgrin], Drute Tshang Riga, Rugo Drantse [Tib. dgra tshe] and Tamdrin Wangdrag [Tib. rta mgrin dbang grags]. Altogether we had 18 riders who left on one day.

At that time, we couldn't leave riding horses and carrying guns directly because the Chinese cavalry were in the village. We made the arrangements to leave separately and detour and get together in a certain place in the south where there were some safe places with rocky mountains and mountains with forests. We planned to go to that place and one night we went to that place. On that night, all of us gathered in that place except 1-2 persons who were living in the village where there were Chinese also living there. So they were unable to come out right away, so they came the next morning.

After we arrived there, we sent some nomads to watch what is happening in the village. The Chinese had asked our wives where their husbands have gone. All of them said that they didn't know where they went. Then the Chinese told the wives, "Tell your husbands to come back. If they come back, they will not be accused of any crime and they can have the title of the chief [Tib. dpon po] as before." Then the family members sent the message to us saying, "If you don't come back, the Chinese are going to arrest you." At that time, we roughly talked about fighting with the Chinese. There were some people among us said that it would be useless to fight with the Chinese because if we kill 1,000 Chinese, 10,000 will come." We stayed in the mountains for about 1 year.

Q: What was the name of the place?

A: The place was called Trokhog [Tib. khro khog]. It was a safe nomads place where there were rocky mountains and mountains with forest. There were also good pastures for grazing animals. Then we asked people about what the Chinese were saying and about the news in Lhasa, we heard that some people wearing helmets have come [from India] to the Nathula [Tib. sna stod la] Mountain Pass. After that, they [Chinese] publicized about this very much. Then we thought if that was true, we should better go to Lhasa rather than fighting here and we went to Lhasa via the northern route.

After we arrived at Lhasa, we knew that it was a lie and nothing happened in Lhasa. It was 1956, when the Dalai Lama went to India for the pilgrimage. They said that it would be good to go to India for a pilgrimage and I came to India. After that, when we were listening to what happened in Kham, we heard that the Chinese collaborated with the internal traitors [Tib. phyi ma nang] in Targye Gomba and they gave money to the poor people. They arrested the Lamas in Gantse [Tib. dkar rtse]. After that, about 10,000 Chinese soldiers surrounded the place and blocked the road. Then the people in Targye Gomba talked to each other saying that if we don't hand over the guns, our lives will be in danger." They had to hand over the guns, except that they hid 1-2 guns.

At that time, there were many Lamas and Geshe and they Chinese shut 2 people in separate cells. From among them Zaro Lojin [Tib. blo sbyin] and Ngawang Norbu [Tib. ngag dbang nor bu] made their decision and went to the Chinese leaders and stabbed two of them and took away their guns and ran away. After they went out, the place was surrounded by the Chinese soldiers and Zaro Lojin was killed there. Ngawang Norbu fainted and later he was also killed. After that, we lost all of our guns and the Chinese told the ordinary monks who were the servants of the Lamas in the monastery, "The Lamas and the one in charge of monastery were landlords and they made you to suffer. But a few of the ordinary monks said, "These people are not landlords and they didn't make us suffer. They were the people who went up and down and traded and fed all the ordinary monks." Then the Chinese said, "You people have been duped by the landlords."

Then, the Chinese left the majority of the people in a relaxed manner and made them hold meetings. After that, the monks called Pachen [Tib. dpa' chen] and Lorin [Tib. blo rin], Phüntso Wangdrag [Tib. phun tshogs dbang grags] who worked in the reception, Gelek Wangdrag [Tib. dge legs dbang grags], Labsum Jiga [Tib. bslabs gsum 'jigs dga'] all together there were about 100 monks who ran away at night carrying some swords although they didn't have guns.

One day after that, the Chinese surrounded the place and the Chinese divided all the monks into teams and probably, they also killed many of the monks with machine guns. After that, when about 100 monks came up, on the way, they met the Chinese and many of the monks were killed and many Chinese were also killed and Chinese took their horses. After that, by the grace of the protective deities, some of the monks got some Chinese horses loaded with long bags of tsamba. Some of the monks good horses and when they went up, at night the Chinese surrounded them. Some of the wounded were left behind and finally there were about 30 riders who could reach Lhasa. The others were killed, arrested and ran away. That's all I heard after I arrived at Lhasa.

Q: At that time, the Chinese were very tactful and did they say that they came to help the Tibetans and they are going back after that?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they help the farmers very much?

A: Yes, they helped the beggars and as for the rich people

Q: In the beginning, did the Chinese say that they are going to implement the democratic reform?

A: They didn't say that.

Q: Did they only say that they came to help the people in Tibet and they will improve the miser?

A: Yes, they are going to improve the miser's livelihood and they gave the poor people lands and shovels and hoe and made them as same as the rich households. They said that they are going to liberate the people. They said that liberation means to make people equal.

Q: When the Chinese came at the first time, they choose some of the well-to-do households and made them work, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they pay them the salary?

A: Yes, they appointed them as leaders and paid them salary in dayan. The Chinese told them they should talk to the miser nicely and say that the Chinese are like grateful parents and make the miser to obey the orders. So they told the miser accordingly because they received the salary.

Q: When the Chinese came, did they set up offices?

A: In the beginning, there wasn't any office, but later they stayed in the houses that used to belong to the Guomindang and the Chinese leader lived in that house.

Q: What kind of positions did they give in the beginning like the director [Ch. zhu ren]?

A: It was called chudrang, the head of a qu.

Q: Did you mean dzong?

A: There were many qu under a dzong.

Q: Did they appoint leaders in the qu?

A: They appointed Chida [?] Gombo Trinley [Tib. mgon po 'phrin las] as the leaders in Ganzi.

A: In the beginning, they paid them salaries and later they arrested all of them and held struggle sessions against them.

A: Like this, they deceived the people and arrested them and all the bad and poor people were appointed as heads.

Q: After that, they said that they are going to implement the reforms, right?

A: Yes.

Q: How was the thinking of some of the people? Did they say that the reforms are good?

A: Nobody said that they were good. They were saying that they were not good.

A: The bad [poorest] people will say that it was good because the Chinese told them, "You had been suffering in the old government and your time has come." So they will say that the Central Committee is great.

A: Some of the servants said, "The employer didn't pay me enough wages. So I want the share from them." So they were given horses and dzo as their shares.

Q: After the Chinese arrived, for how many years did they act tactfully [Tib. mkhas po]? From what year did they deteriorate? They came to Chamdo in 1950. They came to your place before that, right?

A: It was in 1947-48.

Q: I don't think it was 1948 because the Communist didn't win the whole area of China till 1949. Probably, this must be in 1949.

A: Probably.

Q: For how many years did they act tactfully?

A: They treated the Khambas very nicely for many years and they let the traders do their trading and they helped them and paid them dayan in Lhasa for the merchandise. Until they did liberation, they acted tactfully until 1956. In 1956, they said that they are going to liberate us and then they got worse. Since then, whenever we would meet the Chinese on the way, they would turn away their face and go like this. Before that, whenever we would meet the Chinese, they would call us laoxiang (fellow countryman) and shake hands.

Q: At the end of 1954, the Dalai Lama went to China. How were the Chinese at that time?

A: They were good at that time. But, they were suspicious that fighting might take place.

Q: When the Dalai Lama came back, they were not very bad, right?

A: The Chinese were not that bad at that time. They were treating the traders and all people nicely.

Q: When the Dalai Lama went to India, the Chinese became worse, right?

A: Yes, just after the Dalai Lama went to India, the Chinese were liberating the Kham area.

Q: What happened at that time? You were unable to remain as before, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes, then they gathered the beggars in a big house and told them, "You should oppose the chiefs and the rich farmers and we will support you. They had been exploiting you in the past. The Communist will divide all the lands to the miser and we will make it equal."

Q: Then the democratic reforms were started, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Since then they got worse, right?

A: Yes, they treated the poor miser very nicely and they looked angrily to the chiefs and the rich farmers like us. They told us, "In the past, you had been exploiting the miser and now you have to return them their things." Like this, they made us to suffer. Therefore, we couldn't tolerate and had to run away. That's how they deceived us in the beginning and implemented the reforms.